

met6

The Mire End Tribune, Issue 6: The Myths & Folklore issue

The irregular mini-supplement and newsletter for the a/state RPG
Published by Contested Ground Studios

This Issue:

Features

'The Myth of The Toymaker'

A tale of toys and strange occurrences
by Greg Saunders

'Music On The Water'

Who is it who plays his flute on the
edges of Basin? A story by John Dodd

Plus many others

Regulars

From The Grounds

Faces In The Crowd

Mire End News

Small Ads



credits

Writing: Alias, Colin Chapman, Malcolm Craig, Adam Doochin, John Dodd, Ed Handley, W Alexander McKinney, Steven Ross, Greg Saunders, Mark Whalley

Cover & Internal Art: Paul Bourne

Graphic Design: Paul Bourne

Typesetting: Paul Bourne & Malcolm Craig

Proofreading: Gregor Hutton & Rab Robertson

Published by:

Contested Ground Studios

74 Mungalhead Road

Falkirk

Scotland

FK2 7JG

www.contestedground.co.uk

mail to: info@contestedground.co.uk

Legal Stuff

a/state, the Mire End Tribune and associated concepts are Copyright 2001- 2004 Contested Ground Studios. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the permission of the publishers is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews. Permission is given to reproduce for personal use only. Any similarities to characters, places, situations or institutions, etc (without satirical intent) are purely coincidental.

Disclaimer

a/state is a game for mature gamers. Remember, it's only a game. The views expressed in some parts of this book do not necessarily represent the view of the staff of Contested Ground Studios. This is a work of fiction and should be treated as such. Contested Ground Studios take no responsibility for physical or mental damage as a result of reading or using this book in other ways. In other words, if you hit your friend over the head with this, then it's not our fault. If anything in a/state disturbs or upsets you, then it's probably best that you stop reading now. If you choose to continue, then on your head be it. Although, as we said, it's only a game and should be treated as such. If you're a concerned parent who's reading this, aghast at what your child has been looking at, then maybe you should pay closer attention to what your child is purchasing, rather than blaming us for publishing what is, admittedly, a fairly darkly themed game.

contents

Mire End Tribune News	3
Small Ads	4
Ads, requests and offers for use in your a/state games.	
From The Grounds	4
Updates and nonsense from the staff of CGS	
The Reading List	4
What the nefarious members of Contested Ground Studios have been reading, listening to and digesting in recent weeks.	
Folk Songs and Nursery Rhymes	5
Folk Tales, Myths & Legends	
The Arch	7
by Adam Doochin	
The Cradle	7
by Mark Whalley	
The Loneliest Simil	8
by Adam Doochin	
Music On The Water	9
by John Dodd	
The Tyrant of Kye Hill	10
by Ed Handley	
The Vault	10
by Mark Whalley	
Adventure Nuggets	
The Third Line	11
by John Dodd	
The Myth Of The Toymaker	12
by Greg Saunders	
Faces In The Crowd	
The Butcher	14
by W Alexander McKinney	
Cobby the Hermit	14
by Ed Handley	
Totterman the Tattler	15
by W Alexander McKinney	



Hager Abroad In Mire End?

Strange sightings around the Railway shanties have been attributed to the legendary Hager.

Many shanty dwellers claim to have been terrorised by the mysterious figures and speculation is running rampant. At least two score individuals have come forward to The Tribune with their stories.

No witnesses have given permission to publish their names, but the staff of

The Tribune can attest to the sobriety and reliability of many individuals.

Local lostfinder Janus Kripitsch made the following comment: "It's all very mysterious really. I can't fault these people, they really have seen something. As to whether it was of Shifted origin, I can't speculate at this moment in time."

More news on this intriguing story as it becomes available.

Dollymops Found Slain In Brutal Killings

Three prostitutes have been found brutally murdered in The Walk area of Mire End in as many weeks.

Although The Tribune does not wish to disturb its readers with the details of the killings, the bodies were mutilated in a particularly horrible fashion.

All of the murders appear to be the work of a single individual, according to reliable local sources. Each body has been attacked in a similar manner, indicating that one person is responsible.

Rumours indicate that similar slayings have been taking place on the fringes of Folly Hills. Sources within the Provosts have declined to comment on any investigations they may be currently undertaking.

Prostitutes working in Mire End are said to be "Living in fear" by local sources.

There is supposition that the killings may be connected to the as-yet unidentified sect who have recently been issuing proclamations regarding the moral turpitude of Mire End

God Has Forsaken The Burgh, Says Sect

A local sect claims that God has forsaken Mire End due to the behaviour of its inhabitants.

The sect, an offshoot of the Third Church of God the Architect, claims to have received direct messages from a higher power. In a sprawling letter to the Tribune, it is claimed that Mire Enders must return to the fold of Godliness in order to be saved.

It is also claimed that there will be '8 signs' that God is displeased. Chillingly, the letter refers to "the death of manifold harlots" as one of the eight signs.

Father Guy Herbert, of the Third Church, disavowed any knowledge of this breakaway group; "Certainly, this doesn't come under the aegis of the Mother Church, you can be certain of that. These apocalyptic prophecies do nothing to assist the good people of Mire End in their struggle for a better life".

Competition Time!

Win a charming skiff!

Only slightly used!

See page 3 for details!

"Aw man!" says mainly manly man.

Meet The Man On Page 6!



small ads

For Sale: Manson Manfreds 'Man Management Manifesto Manual'. See Manson at the Gaslight.

Wanted: Those who have contacted The Shifted. Good money paid for genuine experiences. Ask for 'Huygens' at 456C Gauntway Alley, Folly Hills.

Some bastard stole my skiff!: Small skiff, cherished family heirloom stolen from Backside Wharf, Mire End. Money for information, beating for thief. Contact Gregor Holliway, Backside Wharf.

Stout fellows wanted!: Live in Forest Green? Want a better life for your family? Then join the Forest Green Regulars! Contact Captain Burnbark. Must have own cosh.

Ink and lead: Had experience in military or security services? Write about your experiences and make cash! Call Folly Hills 55667373737.

Top hat tab tombola: With the new top hat tab tombola, you're the king! Available in a variety of sizes. Note: One size fits all.

Do you?: I bet you do! I'm glad I did and now I want you to do it too! Go on, do it! It's the thing to be done. I'm doing it right now!

from the grounds

'The Lostfinders Guide To Mire End' Release

By the time you read this, the first a|state supplement 'The Lostfinders Guide To Mire End' will be winging its way to a games shop near you! This 32 page book features a full map of Mire End, details of some of the more interesting locations, new NPCs and a bunch of adventure nuggets. Priced at £6/\$10US.

So What's To Come?

We're currently working on the next two a|state supplements: 'Avenues & Alleyways' and 'Iron Ring'. 'Avenues & Alleyways' presents over thirty new city areas, more background information and more adventure nuggets. 'Iron Ring' takes a look at three different explanations for the mysteries of The City, The Shift, The Bombardment and many other aspects of the a|state game world. This allows GMs to choose which (if any) of the explanations fit their view of the world.

Variations On A Theme: Myths & Folklore

This issue of the MET follows the theme of myths, folklore and legends. Within these pages you'll find nursery rhymes, folk tales, adventure nuggets based around mysterious happenings and even more mysterious NPCs.

This is the second in a series of themed issues of the MET, with other upcoming themes including warfare & combat and transport & travel. As always, if you have any ideas you'd like to submit for inclusion in the MET, feel free to drop us a line at: tribune@contestedground.co.uk

the reading list

Gregor

Reading: 'The Old Man and the Sea' (novel) by Ernest Hemingway.

Listening: 'Scarlet's Walk' by Tori Amos, 'Time Out' by The Dave Brubeck Quartet.

John

Reading: 'Snowcrash' (novel) by Neal Stephenson.

Listening: Various things on his hard drive.

Malcolm

Reading: 'Gallipoli: 1915' (non-fiction) by Tim Travers, 'Iron Council' (novel) by China Mieville, 'Pattern Recognition' (novel) by William Gibson.

Listening: 'Stay Oot O' Bo'nness, Will Young!' by Grant Sneddon MC, 'Fingathing And The Big Red Nebula Band' by Fingathing, 'Greatest Hits' by Goldie Lookin' Chain

Paul

Reading: 'The Genesis Code' (novel) by John Case.

Listening: 'Smack Smash' by The Beatsteaks, 'The New What Next?' by Hot Water Music.



FOLK SONGS and NURSERY RHYMES

'Outside', a traditional folk song (origin unknown)

I've been dreaming of Dreamingspires,
Of filth and waste and muck.
I've been shopping in Long Pond,
Where all the boats are stuck.

I've been looking at Brightlights,
At all the happy smiles.
I've been creeping through Contested Grounds,
Betwixt the rubble in piles.

(Chorus)

*But I've yet to have been Outside,
Away from walls and strife.
I long to go Outside,
And escape from this dreary life.*

I've been climbing through Folly Hills,
Atop the statues there.
I've been swimming at Clearwater Break,
And breathed the clean, fresh air.

I've been mining in Deepdown,
And lived an earthish hell.
I've been exploring Calculus Tor,
And found some secrets to tell.

(Chorus)

I've been forgotten in Mire End,
Amongst the rot and age.
I've been praying at Colsetter Parish,
Helped by a kindly sage.

I've been coughing in Burningfell,
While plying a machinist's trade.
I've been tested in Bankside,
And a new man been made.

(Chorus)

I've been eating in Dog Junction,
And made a friend or two.
I've been lounging in Lucent Heights,
An easy life it's true.

I've been lost in Fogwarren,
With many a mystery I did see.
I've been slumming in Merryhell,
A terrible place to be.



The Bombardment

The sky did burn,
The ground did quake,
All the people,
Did shiver and shake,
On that day,
As people died,
A new City arose, alive.

Creeping Tyrant

Around the streets,
The Tyrant creeps,
Its claws are thick with blood,
Children it hunts,
Their bones it eats,
But not if they are good.

Fat Fish

Fat fish lying,
In the pot,
You are frying,
Nice and hot,
In my belly,
You will go,
Serves you right,
For being so slow!

John & Mary

John and Mary,
Hand in hand.
Went a walking,
down a street.
How many shifted,
Did they see?

1... 2... 3... 4... 5... (upto 10)

John and Mary
Ran and ran
How many blocks
Did they get?

1... 2... 3... 4... 5... (upto 10)

John and Mary
Surround by Shifted
How many bites
to eat them up?

1... 2... 3... 4... 5... (until they fall over)

Little Dog

Oh where, oh where has my little dog gone,
Oh where, oh where can he be?
With his ears cut short,
and his tail cut long,
in who's pot can he be?

Little Lost Girl

Little lost girl,
What have you seen?
Your face is all pale now,
Your voice was a scream.
From the dark shadows,
The Shifted, they came,
To play with you girl,
A terrible game.

Little Scurt

Little scurt is nasty,
Its bite is sharp and mean,
It's horrible, not tasty,
It hides, it can't be seen.

Ring Around The City

A ring around The City
A pocket full of dust
A walking, a walking
We all go poof

The Tyrant of Kye Hill

There's a Tyrant lives atop Kye Hill,
all soaked in blood he sits so still,
'cause an old man whispers in his ear,
to calm his heart and bind our fear



folk tales, myths & legends

The Arch*by Adam Doochin*

As long as residents have lived in Folly Hills, they have wondered about the statues that reside there with them. Huge and towering, they come from the time before the Shift, silent reminders of what came before. The soldier, in particular, points towards some locale to the south, and rumors abound about what it is that he points to. Some, however, whisper that he points to a Lost Place, a place known only as The Arch, and that this Arch answers some questions about the soldier.

The Arch, if you can find it, resides snugly in a gap that is over-looked by the populace as a whole, at the meeting point of four large buildings. No one knows where these four buildings are, but the few who claimed to have seen the Arch say that what looks like a normal alleyway when you walk down it blossoms into a small hill that wasn't there at first. On this hill, illuminated in a rarely seen shaft of sunlight, rests the Arch.

Covered in Huyzel vines, the Arch stands about 30 feet wide and 40 feet high. A giant stone monstrosity, it contains hints of artwork carved into the stone face of the arch. Figures and objects can be glimpsed through the tangle of Huyzel vines, giving a tantalizing thought as to what the arch hides. A coherent picture of what the arch tells cannot be gained without the use of something so sharp and heavy to hack through the vines. However, a refreshing and relaxing picnic area with a bit of past history this place is not.

The few tales of the Arch that have spread through the populace tell of the hope of information on the past holds, but also of the dangers that are faced in visiting the arch. The survivors tell of fleeting shadows against the buildings and arch that were glimpsed while studying the Arch. They speak of sounds of movement and faint, unintelligible whispers that follow the shadows after a time. If they stuck around long enough, there's a faint whisper of figures that could be glimpsed approaching the Arch. No one who's lived has witnessed anything else, for they fled for their lives at the point. Of those who didn't flee, nothing has been heard from them since.

The Arch represents a glimpse of the past with a danger. For those who go hunting for the Arch prepared, there is the hope of finding perhaps a few more answers to the mysteries of The City. But, there remains the apparent guardians of the Arch, for no one who has faced them has lived to tell about it.

The Cradle*by Mark Whalley*

There is a whisper along the canals, a story told about wealth and risk, a tale about the Cradle. A gambling house like no other.

Beware when you walk the canals at night, for the Cradle has arms and legs, eyes and mouths working for it. There are those out there who, if you listen to them will seduce you into the Cradle, and from there you may never return.

They say it is a great barge which travels the waters of the canals. Moving softly, slowly on its way. Mist grey in colour, with a curved roof spanning from one side to the other, no windows, no cracks, no hint of life, only a hanging sign showing a hanged dog over a stack of gold bars gives a hint to its purpose. At the back there is a low deck, a place where, if brave enough, a person could step the short distance from the edge of the canal to the barge.

It doesn't stay in one place for very long, but drifts quietly down the canals of The City. It moves at a constant slow walking speed, slipping past in silence, appearing at dusk and vanishing in the early morning light.

It is said that within the walls of the barge is a place where wealth flows free. A place where you can become rich, where you can find an escape from the filth, the crime and the waste that lays all around. For this Barge holds within a place where you can gamble anything, even ones self to gain the riches you desire, all you have to do is place your stake and play.

Those that enter, are those that are brave enough, or foolish enough, those desperate enough, or those just seeking a thrill.

It is told that those that have been within, those lucky ones to win wealth, have a strange haunted look when they find themselves walking down the side of a canal. It is said that some seem to no longer be completely themselves, but more cold, more inhuman, that they no longer look upon their friends or families, but take their riches and abandon all that was their lives before. Others are found curled in a ball, naked and giggling insanely with their newly won wealth scattered around them. And these are the ones that succeeded, they are the lucky ones, the ones that won their desire, their wealth. Those that are not lucky, those that did not win, those are seen no more.

None that return will speak about what happened inside, they say they cannot remember, or simply refuse to speak of it at all. All they say is that the Cradle has many games to play, and many ways to lose.



As to what happens to those that lose, those that do not return from their quest for riches, many things are thought, many things are rumoured. Which it is only those that have entered know, and they do not or cannot speak of it.

The Loneliest Simil

by Adam Doochin

The old man sat back in his rocking chair, stuffing some neebleweed into the bowl of his pipe and looking down at his grandchildren spread out on the floor in front of him. He lit the pipe with a small match and breathed in, exhaling a cloud of the pungent smoke before claspin' the pipe in his hand and peerin' down at his descendants.

"Now... I'll tell ye kids a tale me grandpappy told me afore I was growed up. Jes' like this, we was, me sittin' on th' floor lookin' up at him while he smoked this here very pipe I now hold in me hand. This pipe's got some history to it, yessiree. It does, but I'm not tellin' ya about th' pipe."

"No, granpa, you're not gonna tell us about the pipe," chimed in his grandkids, who had, in fact, already heard about the trials and tribulations that that pipe had gone through.

"Tha's right. I'm gonna tell ya about Th' Loneliest Simil. Now, ya'll know about Simils. How they tend ta be found in groups, and how they'll work for us humans for a price. But this 'un, this 'un was different."

"How was he different, granpa?" asked Lucianne, the youngest girl.

"Well, for one thing, this here Simil, he didn't travel in no group. Nosir, this here Simil, he traveled alone. No one evered seed him with other Simils; they'd always just see him a'walkin' alone down an alleyway, pausin' every once in a while to search through some garbage, or look at somethin'.

For another, he'd never work for no human for no price. People'd try ta hire him for a job or somethin', that's for sure. I mean, he was a Simil, that's what he was there for. But nosiree, he'd never work for 'em. He'd always just nod and smile an' a then make his way on down the alley. Well, folks were mighty miffed by this here Simil's attitude, tha's for sure. Some youngin' crept up behind him one day and sprayed a big X in red on his front and on his back, so as that folks'd know this was the Simil that wouldn't help him.

Well, time went by and people stopped payin' attention to this particular Simil since he never seemed to pay no mind to the people. They got on with their lives, and he got on with his... well, with whatever it is that he was up ta. Until one day, that is, where somethin' strange happened.



One day, what with its state and all, a building collapsed that still had some folks residin' there inside of it. People, they screamed and they anguished, but no one could move that rubble aside and get to what folks were still alive, trapped there under all o' that rubble. But then there's this rumbling, and the ground's all a' shakin', and here comes this Simil, all a' runnin' down the road, bowlin' people over as he runs towards the rubble, his metal joints all a' clankin' and groanin' from the effort.

This Simil, he starts to grab a piece a' rubble and a' hurl it off ta one side. No one does much of a thing to stop him, what with him bein' this big, huge Simil, and what with the utter state a confusion that these here people were in 'cause he was hurlin' rubble one way and th' other.

Well, now, they jes' let this here Simil kept on with what he was doin'. Some folks even helped him, with the small bits at least, what with that they couldn't pick up the large bits. Eventually that Simil, well, he dug himself down deep into that there building, and he started pullin' out some of the survivors of the collapse. Leadin' 'em up all gentle-like up the makeshift stairs that he had created. The night wore on and he kept on helpin' people out and diggin' down through that rubble.



Come mornin', now, this Simil finished his work. He had pulled everyone that stilled lived outta that rubble and had clambered his way on back up outta that there hole he'd a dug. Mind ya know, there were still bodies buried deep down in all a' that rubble, but he left that for the folks to get to themselves, if'n they were so inclined.

Without stickin' around to receive thanks from the folks he'd a saved, that Simil jes' ignored everyone and walked on off, going back about his business as he had always done before.

People still talk about him. Folks say that sometimes when some big tragedy strikes that he comes a'runnin' to save th' day. Some claimed ta have been saved by him personally, and then there's always the folks who say they saw some Simil with a big X painted on him jes a'mindin' his own buisness. So, kids, if'n ya ever see that there Simil, say a kind word, maybe instead a' asking for his help, ask if'n ya could help him out. Ya never know what he might say."

With those as his last words the grandfather tapped the ash outta his pipe and waved his grandchildren on outta the room. He stood up out of his chair and shuffled on over to a small chest containing most of his worldly belongs. Opening up a draw, he pulled out a faded and worn sepia tone picture of a Simil with a big X on its chest hurling a giant piece of stone to the side, a grimace of concentration on his face. A scuffle on the floor caused him to turn his head and look at his youngest, Lucianne, standing there, twisting her foot back and forth, head held down but with her eyes cast up, looking at him.

The grandfather smiled and gave the picture one last pat before kneeling down on knees that didn't work so well anymore, holding out the picture to his granddaughter. She gasped in awe and took it with outstretched arms, gazing over the picture before clutching it to her chest and looking at her grandpa. He smiled and nodded to her, giving her a quick hug and then a light push to go outside to play, carrying the legend of The Loneliest Simil on to another generation.

Music on the Water

by John Dodd

0700 of the day and at the edge of the Basin, something stirs, not from the water, but on the land. A man sits here every morning, no one knows his name, no one knows his purpose, but he's here every day without fail. Always the same melody he plays, always the same time. I took a boat over to him one morning to find out why he did it. He refused to speak till he had finished playing his music, then turned to look at me, from the look of him, I would take him to be easily fifty, nearer to sixty, his eyes still alight with the fire that I've only seen in teenagers' eyes.

"What is it I can help you with?" he asked me politely, his voice far deeper than his build would indicate.

I explained that I was curious as to why he played music every morning, he seemed puzzled for a second till I indicated his flute.

"Ah, the sonnet of the soul?" He nodded without waiting for my reply "I play every morning to soothe the spirit of The City" "Spirit of The City?" I asked.

"Yes" he started to pack his instrument away as if his explanation was complete.

"What do you mean?" I asked

He finished wrapping his bundle and turned back to me "look there" he said, pointing out to the centre of Basin, I looked, seeing nothing and told him so.

"Precisely" he replied, hefting his bundle to his shoulder.

"Precisely what?" I asked.

"You see nothing out there, that is why I play, because as long as I play, the nothing will remain."

"You think there is something out there."

He fixed me with a gaze most parents use on their children when they are being particularly stupid.

"No" he replied calmly, a controlled edge to his tone "I don't think there's something out there."

"So what is it?"

"The spirit of The City." he replied again, the same tone to his voice.

"But what is that?"

"Do you think that all the creatures in here share a common purpose? That we all just magically grew from the same clay?" His voice took on a nasty edge "Do you believe a God put us all here to worship him?"

I had no words to reply with.

"I thought not," he sneered "the spirit of The City is what binds us together, what has always kept us together."

"And it is restless?" I asked breathlessly, his intensity honestly scaring me momentarily.

He smiles softly as a parent might to a child they wish to reassure "Look around you at the days gone by, where do you not see violence, where do you not see chaos, the Spirit senses this, it seeks to redress these wrongs."

"And you're trying to stop it doing that?"

He smiled again, more at ease this time "I seek to stop it putting things right in the way it wants to."

"What is that way?"

"Look around you, how many Shifted do you see, and how many humans? What makes you think that the spirit would do anything except level the field so that all races were equal?"

His words carried a finality that God himself could not muster.

"And so you play?" my voice had a tremor in it this time.

"Till the end of my time." he replied proudly, "Maybe I will die



without finding a person to take over for me, maybe then the spirit will be loose, maybe all I have worked for will be for nothing, I don't know. Either way, I can go to my rest knowing that I did all in my power to stop it."

With those words, he hefted his bundle up onto his shoulder and climbed down the side of the banking to a small boat, leaving those of us on the shore pondering his meaning. I don't know about you readers out there, but I'm giving serious thought to music lessons.



The Tyrant of Kye Hill

by Ed Handley

*There's a Tyrant lives atop Kye Hill,
All soaked in blood he sits so still,
'cause an old man whispers in his ear,
to freeze his heart and calm our fear.*

On the eastern side of Forest Green, in Mire End, the ground rises. Beginning about a mile from the Old Furnace, it slopes gradually until the level rises above the filthy water, forming the small island known as Kye Hill. Given the fact it is one of the few dry areas in Mire End, an outsider would probably expect it to be the home of the area's (mostly criminal) elite but they would be entirely wrong. Kye Hill is believed by almost everyone in Mire End to be riddled with shifted areas and stalked by any number of dangerous creatures.

A doggerel rhyme told to the children of Forest Green even tells of a Tyrant that lurks in the abandoned ruins atop the hill. Many point to Old Cobby as evidence that the rhyme is true, but more rational minds point out that Cobby can be no more than fifty or sixty years old, and even some of the oldest of the settled residents around the hill remember their grandparents singing the odd verse when they were children themselves. They do say that before Cobby there was another old man living in the shattered ruins of the pawnbrokers on Shank's Lane, but to the rational adult mind that's simply the

least broken down building before you get onto the cursed ground of the hill proper.

Nevertheless there are plenty of children and youths who consider the existence of the Tyrant an absolute fact and who dare each other to venture into the rotting ruins. Few go far, and every year a number of children disappear after accepting such a dare, adding to the legend. Those few children who have ventured up the hill any distance are considered great heroes among their peers, and often tell fanciful stories about a man of iron and stone crouched over a great sword.

Some go so far as to say they've seen Cobby walking around it muttering to himself, and one or two even claim to have crept close enough to see tears running down the face of the frozen Tyrant. Most adults consider the stories of their offspring little more than the boasts children make among themselves, forgetting their own youthful adventures on the hill. The fact remains that no-one except old Cobby lives on what would otherwise be a prime area of Forest Green.

The Vault

by Mark Whalley

In the evenings when mothers put their children to bed, stories are often told. When, as kids, we play with their friends, stories are told. We have all grown up with tales of "The Canal Serpent", of "The Little Boat girl", of "The Hero and the Shifted", and many others. One popular yarn that children of a certain age tell each other is "The Vault of Secrets".

Beneath The City is another place, a place of pipes and tunnels. Of dripping water and dark shadows. Many secrets are hidden away down there, and many terrors guard them.

Let me tell you how the macrocorps became what they are. You see, beneath our feet, hidden in the twists and turns of the tunnels, are secret chambers, vaults sealed since before The Shift, when the world was different and science ruled over all.

The ancient people placed all their secrets into nine vaults. Sealed away to protect them. Why they did this no one knows, perhaps they knew what was coming, perhaps their world was torn by wars, who can say. All that matters is that they did this thing.

Now, over the centuries these vaults were found, they were opened and their secrets taken. That's how the macrocorps grew, for the founders of each macrocorp were the ones that found a vault. They used the secrets within to build marvels, to build all the fantastic things that you see each time you look towards their mountains of glass and steel.



Yes, you've realised that there's one left. One Vault left to be found. Somewhere down deep, down in those tunnels. Many have looked, many have never returned. Darkness dwells down there guarding the vault, keeping it lost.

Perhaps one day someone will find it, perhaps one day you will find it, perhaps it will be me."

Many kids of that certain adventuring age have gone looking, and even some adults still believe in this last vault, and have hunted for it all their lives. Most people view the story as a fable, a tale for children. They laugh at those that claim to have seen it, calling them mad fools.

adventure nuggets

The Third Line

by John Dodd

Everyone knows that The Train has only two lines, there were supposed to be more, but they never got around to building them. Thousands of people work with the Train, and they all know that there are only two lines. However, certain information leaked by an unnamed source indicates something a little different.

At the Northern Terminal there is another platform, down from the main platforms, barricaded by wood and stone, where no one can reach it, the platform of the Third Line. According to myth and folklore, the platforms were completed and the initial track, a circular route running around the edges of The City, capable of taking cargo and passengers both to and from the outside, was completed and due to go into service. A ceremony was organised on the quiet, where a number of high officials and important members of the Transport hierarchy were invited to witness the first run of the line. Engine 2127 and a carriage of civilian observers were loaded onto the Third Line and started off towards the edge of The City.

They never returned.

Several search parties were sent to find out what happened to the engine and its passengers, but there were no signs of any of them. Whispered rumours abounded, that the Shifted had ambushed the train, that it had fallen into the canals and sank from view, that it had continued past the edge of The City and found its way outside, whatever the cause, no trace of the train or its passengers could be found.

Shortly after the loss of the engine, the Third Line was decommissioned, all the personnel were released from service, the

track was deconstructed, all the line was removed from service and placed in storage. All entrances to the line were boarded up, and any personnel that had worked on the line were given contractual releases. Since then, no one has seen anything of the Third Line or those who travelled upon it.

Those living beneath the North Terminal tell a different story, when the clouds are gone from the sky, and the moon shines down over the Terminal, thin lines of purest starborn silver can be seen extending to the north of the Terminal, out over the canal. On the nights of the full moon, at the stroke of midnight, rumours abound of a silver train pulling out of the station, number 2127, its carriages full of smiling and cheering people, heading out to the North and the place where they all went to so many years ago.

No pictures of the train or the Third Line has ever been taken, and given the nature of the sources from which the legends come, few have been interested in following up the possibility that something still uses the line. Those living below say that they have often seen the faces of those who died on board the carriage and that the faces are never the same from one time to the next. No comment has been drawn from the masters of the line and all who work the lines are under a strict code of silence regarding the goings on there.

Murmurings of addicts looking for some meaning to their lives? One would almost be certain to say so until you consider the other side of the equation

On the other side of The City is the Southern Terminal, where the end point of the third line was constructed so long ago, this was where Engine 2127 was scheduled to arrive and when the disappearance was noted, this line too was decommissioned. Those living under the Southern Terminal have never been to the North, most of them stay close to the fires that they've built far beneath, but they speak of a train on the Third Line as well. The only difference being that that this train can only be seen when the sun shines directly upon it, a rare occasion given the proximity of the Terminal to the wall. The lines leading to the terminal, as well as the train itself, are black, like the shadow of night. The passengers, far from being happy and cheerful like the ones to the north, looking more like prisoners of war, all of them wear an expression of tortured agony, misery beyond the nightmares of human endurance. Like the Northern Train, these passengers are never the same from one trip to the next and those living below believe that this train ferries the damned to the final end.

The reports of the Third Line have been largely ignored up until now, but given the growing rumours, it can only be a matter of time before an investigation is launched into these sightings and when that happens, you can be sure that it'll be something worth reading about.



The Myth of the Toymaker

by Greg Saunders

Rumours of the existence of the Toymaker permeate through The City, existing in the subconscious at every level of the grossly stratified society, from the lost children of Mire End to the pampered rich of Lucent Heights. Social theorists at Longshore University believe that stories of the Toymaker persist because unlike so many legends, the myths of the Toymaker offer something different to those that believe in them - understanding, comprehension, and ultimately a new understanding of the relationship between people and The City.

According to most tales, the Toymaker existed before the Shift, in the bright times now so long forgotten. He was so named because he created wonderful toys and playthings, toys that he distributed freely to the children of The City. These toys usually took the form of miniature people and animals, capable of independent movement, exquisitely constructed from metal, wood and stone. No one knew who the Toymaker was or where he dwelt, but his gifts could be found on every street of The City. For many years, children of all ages played with the toys, looked after them and ultimately handed them down from generation to generation.

This continued for many decades, with the Toymaker ceaselessly construction new wonders for the people of The City. But then, suddenly, the appearance of new toys stopped. At first people thought that the Toymaker had either died or moved on, and his earlier works became all the more cherished. But soon rumours began to circulate that the Toymaker still laboured on but had diverted his energies into a magnificent new project. Whispers in the schools and the bedrooms of The City's children spoke of the recreation of The City in miniature form, The Toymaker's greatest toy, with every building constructed in perfect scale, every street and canal mapped. All within The City would be reconstructed in elaborate detail at a fraction of real size, creating a vast, three-dimensional map of The City.

This was to be the Toymaker's greatest work and a gift to the children of The City. But before the work was finished came the Shift and the Bombardment. The structure of The City and the very makeup of reality itself were twisted, altered and warped into something broken, something lost and without hope. Tales of miraculous toys were forgotten as people struggled simply to survive. The Toymaker became nothing more than a distant legend, a half-remembered myth, like so much that existed before the Shift.

But decades after the Shift, rumours of the Toymaker resurfaced. Apparently, the Toymaker had survived the Shift and Bombardment and was still working on, restructuring his

miniature City to reflect the changes brought about by the Shift. The gift, once complete, would still be given to the people of The City, just a little more time was required to update the model. There was still hope, the greatest toy was still being made.

Since that time rumours of the Toymaker surface occasionally, each a reiteration of the last - the Toymaker still lives and is busy updating his model to reflect changes in the structure of The City. Once he deems the model complete he will release his gift to the children of The City. All that is needed is a little more patience...

The Toymaker may seem to many a children's story, a tale of a mysterious worker and magical, miraculous gifts, but to the adults of the present day City it means so much more than that. If the Toymaker did exist, then perhaps his reconstruction of The City also existed. Perhaps it survived the Shift, perhaps it could be found. Though seemingly no more than idle fancy, the possibility that a three-dimensional map of The City - perhaps one pre-dating the Shift - is still in existence is too enticing a possibility to ignore. Given the supposed accuracy and intricacy of the Toymaker's creations, would his City be as perfect? With every road, canal, building mapped out and every power source located? The position of every vault of knowledge lost since the Shift finally revealed? And within these buildings, would rooms, stairs and cellars be shown? As unlikely as it may seem, such a map, even one hundreds of years out of date, would be a prize beyond reckoning. And if the Toymaker's work had somehow continued to the present and the map were up to date? Could it be true that the inner chambers of Macrocorp headquarters, the barracks of the Contested Grounds and the mysteries of the Barrens are all mapped out in exquisite detail?

It is known that several of the Macrocorps have taken a keen interest in the myth of the Toymaker. There have been supposed links to the Lostfinders, who seem to know the byways of The City so well, something they vehemently deny. Others wish to preserve the stories, waiting for a day when The City is revealed to them in all its former glory, waiting for a chance to see their world and perhaps to understand where they fit into the scheme of The City.

The Truth

Of course the truth of the Toymaker myth is unknown, but there follows a few possible suggestions that the games master may take up if they wish to centre an adventure on this myth. Of course, all these are merely suggestions and may be ignored or only alluded to, for in many ways it is the mystery of The City and the lack of any clear understanding of the past that defines the a/state world.



The Myth: The entire Toymaker story is a myth, a legend with only a vague basis in fact. Simply not true and that's all there is to it.

The Dead: The Toymaker existed but is long since dead - whoever or whatever the Toymaker was, he was lost during the Shift and the Bombardment. Nothing remains but stories.

The Shift: The Toymaker is connected to the Shift - the Toymaker is a relic of the Shift, something dangerous and unknowable. If he is modelling the entire City, it is for his own strange reasons.

The Cult: The Toymaker is dead but his cult lives on - inspired by the myths of the Toymaker, a dedicated band of men work ceaselessly, constructing tiny models of The City in an attempt to understand their environment. They have links to the Lostfinders (who help them refine their maps in exchange for information) and are sought by the Macrocorps (for their knowledge of The City), but will violently protect their beliefs

The Automaton: The Toymaker is an automaton - the Toymaker is not a living being but an automaton, a machine, a giant Dingen that feeds off the power grid and rides the dataflow. The function of the machine is to map The City, but it can never complete its work as the structure of The City is always evolving, or perhaps it has become deranged attempting to map the Lost Places. Maybe, stored in vast memory banks, are blue prints of The City through the ages, including the bright times before the Shift and Bombardment.

Adventure Possibilities

Donovan Cowell, a scavenger from Mire End, has been selling his scraps on the canal side in Folly Hills for more years than anyone can remember. This day he sits mumbling by the waters' edge much like any other, except amongst the scrap metal, rotten books and assorted rubbish that constitute his usual wares is a rather peculiar object. Covered in muck and slime (Donovan is sufficient detached from reality not to realise the possible benefits of cleaning his goods), it appears to be a model of building constructed from thin strips of metal. On closer inspection, the model is recognisable as a very good likeness of the old Water Tower, a derelict building in Mire End that collapsed just over a year ago. Furthermore, the model is excellent - cunningly constructed and extremely detailed.

While passing the area the players notice the model poking out from the general trash gathered around Donovan's feet. Inquisitive characters are most likely to take a look, and should be encouraged to buy it - it must be worth some money and Donovan will except pretty much any offer for it. Either way, as they lift the item from the floor and wipe away

the muck, several other people on the canal side will stop to take a look, and murmurs of interest can be heard floating around the growing crowd.

If the players don't buy the model, an excitable woman, Mary Clegg, steps forward from the growing crowd and tries to make the purchase, claiming that the Toymaker is real and she wants the evidence! This should be enough to persuade even the most disinterested players to buy the item themselves. All through the proceedings Donovan sits silently, apparently oblivious. Unfortunately for the players, there are several other people in the crowd that morning that are extremely interested in the appearance of the model and three are outlined below.

Chester Vance - Sideband Media stringer.

But what's this? The Toymaker? I remember that. Now this could be a story...

Snide, sycophantic and heartless, Chester makes it his business to report on others lives and he knows that hanging around where it's going down is the best place to pick up a good story. Moving unobtrusively through the crowds, Chester is always on the lookout for something worth reporting. Just recently his luck's been down, nothing seems to be happening beyond the usual fighting and thieving. But maybe he's overdue a change.

Peter Colepepper - Third Church activist.

Evidence of the Toymaker? But if god is the Architect of The City, what is the Toymaker? A false idol? A saviour? This must be investigated further.

Quiet, unobtrusive and softly spoken, beneath the surface Colepepper is an terrorist with an unshakable belief in his convictions. The third church is his life and he will do anything to further the beliefs of the church - anything. He has stolen, threatened and killed, all in the name of the Architect. Some would label him an extremist and a terrorist, but he believes he is utterly justified in his actions. He watches the model building with interest.

Damien Hillidge - Trilhoeven executive.

What's that? Looks like some kind of model building or something. Seems to be creating a bit of a stir though, maybe worth checking out. The Toymaker? What the hell is the Toymaker? Might be worth having a quick look into that out when I get back to the office...

A man used to fading into the background, Damien is a Cripplecut addict who cannot get enough, no matter the danger of visiting the venues where suchfights are held. Still he has some muscle with him, a Ghostfighter that trails him by thirty paces and makes sure nothing untoward develops. A



hard night at the Cripplecut fights is not for everyone, but Damien has been going so long he's learnt how to shake off his company image and settle into the lower classes. As long as he keeps his mouth shut. But he's been doing that for years, and so far, so good.

If the players bought the model, they may well find themselves with the unwanted attention of some or possibly all of the above individuals above and the forces they represent, which could be extremely dangerous. Each group wants to know the answers to the same question - where did the model come from, and who made it? Only Donovan knows the answer, and he has since disappeared into the depths of Mire End. Perhaps the players might like to find him before things get out of hand...

faces in the crowd

The Butcher

by W Alexander McKinney

Age: 39

Height/Build: 6' /Skeletal

Eye/Hair Colour: Brown/Blond

Occupation: Doctor

Affiliations: Hohler gang, Various Cults (particularly shift worshippers)

When one falls victim to illness or injury in the seemingly endless slums of The City, they are left with few places to turn. Any street corner dealer can offer something to take one's mind off the pain – but what if one isn't prepared to give up just yet?

When no one else cares and you don't have the money for a hospital, the inevitable choice becomes the Butcher.

Where the Butcher learned his trade, few men care to guess. As a doctor he certainly seems to take very little interest in his own health and only remembers to eat or rest when his body refuses to work without either. Simils could be said to have more meat on their bones. But for all his appearance, the renegade doctor shows no signs of slowing down.

Indeed, tracking the man can be a task in itself.

Though he does keep a number of dedicated "offices", these are really, decrepit buildings or flats ripe with the smell of the dying. These unsanitary butcher shops are a breeding ground for infectious diseases and more than one patient has suffered a sudden terminal 'relapse' while in the process of recovery. Throughout The City, he rarely stays at a single location for more than a week.

In addition to his role as doctor, for which he charges no more than everything the patient can afford, (including services of the flesh and donations of redundant organs) the Butcher also does a lucrative business in stolen organs. Those he can make use of are immediately transplanted to their waiting recipients .. the remainder are left in dark alleyways for the shifted. What the man gets in exchange for these offerings, none dare enquire.

The Butcher has strong ties with the Hohler gang, for whom he is often put to use repairing the occasionally damaged prostitute. (In whatever form that 'repair' might demand) Additionally, he uses his practice as a none too discrete cover for spreading dependence upon the gang's many designer drugs.

What the physician's true origins are no one seems to know, but the fact is: none who come to him can afford to give it much thought.

Cobby the Hermit

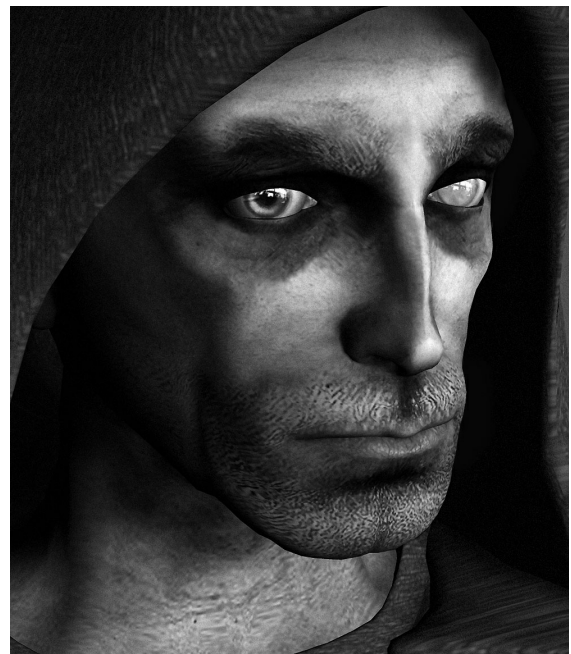
by Ed Handley

Age: He appears to be at least 50

Height/Build: Stooped and hunched he barely makes 5'9"/Tough to tell under those rags and that cloak but he can't be more than seven or eight stone.

Eye/Hair Colour: The left is Silver, the right Amber/White such as it is

Affiliations: God, or possibly Gods, he's not sure most days.



The current incumbent of the mad old men lining in Shank's Lane is hardly an impressive figure. Swaddled in rags and wrapped in a tattered cloak he stumbles around edges of



Kye Hill muttering nonsense to himself. Children taunt him, some of the braver ones throw things at him and whenever a child goes missing on or near the hill Cobby will receive a thrashing and his home will be searched for remains, though in all the time Cobby has lived on the edges of the hill none have ever been found, and children always seem to go missing somewhere well away from wherever Cobby is at the time. The sad truth is that to the vast majority of people Old Cobby isn't even a person.

It's impossible to tell if this bothers Cobby at all as the only way he ever interacts with the rest of humanity (indeed the only time he ever seems to say an understandable word) is through his bellowing rants on the subject of salvation. The content would generally lead an astute listener to believe that Cobby was once a priest of the Church of God the Architect, but on his wilder days he spews heresies that have led more than one member of the Lay Reserves Martial to give him a sound thrashing. This never seems to stop Cobby from coming down to preach to the residents of Forrest Green.

Totterman the Tattler

by W Alexander McKinney

Age: 65

Height/Build: 5'8/Emaciated

Eye/Hair Colour: Watery Blue/White

Occupation: Beggar

Affiliations: Unknown

Totterman the Tattler is a rarity among the self centered and secretive citizens of The City; for here is a man, both brilliant and perceptive, who truly cares about the welfare of others. The fact that he chooses to make his living begging in the streets of Fogwarren may also be evidence that he is quite mad.

A self styled storyteller, Totterman regales all who would listen with Faerytales, anecdotes, bits of wisdom and folklore from a seemingly endless well of imagination.

When they can find the time, street people by the score come to listen to the old man's fables; though it would be a lie to suggest only the destitute come to hear him speak. Provosts, gangsters, merchants, eventually everyone who passes through Fogwarren finds himself listening to these wild narratives.

When not speaking to enlighten or earn the few coins thrown his way, the Tattler takes it upon himself to school all comers in the art of words. Through use of whimsical rhymes he introduces the uneducated to the alphabet and the basic rules of grammar. In dirty streets he teaches them the shape of letters and numbers.

While it can honestly be said that his efforts do little to change the status quo, he does give those who come to him a sense of accomplishment and self respect they rarely find anywhere else.

To look at him Totterman is probably exactly what you'd expect; a withered man, hunch backed and dark skinned, hair clinging to his head in fleeting wisps. His dogskin coat is patched a hundred times over, yet remains the finest piece of clothing he owns.

Occasionally a generous or fortunate soul will bring the old man gifts of clothing or food. Invariably, however, these things find their way to those the storyteller deems needier than himself.

If probed, the old man has little to say about himself; though not through any desire for secrecy. The truth is, Totterman simply does not imagine himself or his life to be that interesting, and would rather spend his time teaching than boring his audience. Even the origin of his nickname has been wholly lost in the folds of time .. though it has stuck nonetheless.

Most perceive the Tattler as a harmless and well meaning old man .. full of interesting tales and a kind spirit. While he is certainly all these things, a very few know him to be something more. Should one be perceptive and attentive enough, he may come to recognize that not all of the storyteller's tales are simple whimsy. Indeed, couched amidst a maze of metaphor and simile are truths, and near truths, few people can claim knowledge of. Totterman, you see, is a wizard at piecing together stories from scraps of rumor and innuendo. Over a long lifetime he has turned himself into a repository of hidden knowledge second to none. Should the wrong person discover his secret, the old man understands too well that his life would be forfeit. Thus, he never answers a question directly, never offers to unravel mysteries. He chooses for whom and when his knowledge is best given and leaves the recipient to make some sense of it him or herself.

